

How Don Q. Dealt With Don Luis.

Chronicles of Don Q.

By K. and Hesketh Pritchard

The British government, having been put to some trouble in the matter of Gevil-Hay, immediately and seriously demanded that the brigand who originated the unpleasantness should be forthwith caught and punished. Whereupon the authorities at Madrid sent down a strongly worded remonstrance to Don Felipe, governor of the town by the sea, inquiring why Don Q., the brigand in question, had not been plucked from his eyrie and executed long ago.

So it came to pass that Felipe Majada sat in his chair and cursed the British government by the length and breadth and to the depth and height of the Spanish language.

Thrown upon his own resources and realizing that something must be done, which it seemed the ordinary agencies of the law could not effect, he fell back upon the device of employing private enterprise.

It was upon this business that he journeyed to Malaga to meet a certain Don Luis del Monte, who appeared to him extraordinarily qualified for the task to be performed. In Spain, as in other countries there is always a sufficiency of broken gentlemen, ready to lend a hand to any well paid job. Luis del Monte was one of these.

At the time Don Felipe summoned him, he was living in aching poverty above a shop where they sold tobacco and stamps.

The governor entered into the business with a new zest. To pit Don Luis against Don Q. meant bloodshed, and in fact Felipe Majada the instigator of the business was not a man to be trifled with.

"Sit down," he said aloud; "I will explain the plan I have formed."

Then he told the story of Gevil-Hay's detention by the brigands, and with the matter of the ransom, and added many other details given by former captives until del Monte felt he was in possession of all the needful facts of the case. Between them stood wine and cigarettes—the short, brown Spanish cigarettes rolled in sweetened paper, not innocent of saltpetre. Don Luis smoked one after another as he listened, gazing out with absent eyes over the two harbors of Malaga.

When Majada ceased he began. "I have heard much of Don Q. He appears to be a sort of fellow who has made the best use of his opportunities up yonder. I had thoughts of going into the business myself. Meanwhile what do you want me to do?"

The governor of the little white town put his wish plainly and largely. "We must rid ourselves of this vulture," he said.

"So?"

"It will be worth your while," added Majada.

"That is as it may be. The risk is great."

"True. But one does not pay for nothing."

"What do you propose to pay the man who undertakes to say down?"

"One thousand pesetas."

Don Luis del Monte laughed and snapped his fingers in contempt.

"Two thousand pesetas then."

Don Luis shook his head.

"Dollars," he said parenthetically.

"Impossible! Would you ruin the country?"

"No, no. You forget I know better, my dear señor. I have already in my time explored her pockets myself! Two thousand dollars."

The question was not settled in a moment, but eventually Don Luis del Monte's debonair inflexibility on the point prevailed.

"The price of my life," he said, "and a beggarly bargain."

"For the government," amended Don Felipe. "Besides you will live to enjoy it in Malaga. How, then, do you propose to get to work?"

"I must be captured, and you will arrange the ransom. They say down here that the brigand recognizes a gentleman and treats him handsomely pending the arrival of the ransom and the arrangement of his affairs. If he does not—well, I am an old soldier. Meanwhile, I shall have five days in his company."

"By St. Peter! Cold steel and close quarters!" cried Don Felipe, with rising excitement. "Señor, you are not a coward."

"Nor a fool," rejoined the other coldly.

"Then you have some other design—yes?"

"Certainly I have a design less blaring than yours. I shall start in the early morning."

"Stay! How will you deal with him?"

"As a goatherd and the farmer deal with the other quebranta-huesos. I will poison him. He shall share the death of the vultures and the wolves. I shall have five full whole days with him, I tell you. How can he escape me?"

"I do not know," Don Felipe said dubiously as he watched the thin, sinister face opposite him with a smug interest. "But I have heard him called a bad enemy."

"And I will conquer him by being a bad friend, which is just twice as formidable."

"Yet," and Don Felipe lowered his voice instinctively, "he has other friends. I came hither to Malaga, for in my own house across the bay some fear would have heard and some foot have been ready to carry the matter up yonder."

Don Luis made no answer. He put a handful of the governor's cigarettes in his pocket and prepared to go.

"I must have money tonight—money to repair my toilet, to buy a horse and lay the affair in train. It is necessary to be generous, señor. This may be my last night of pleasure, and then, perhaps—he began the song with which children mimic the clerk's chant at funeral—the gongor comes next. Who knows?"

Don Luis del Monte swaggered gracefully down the dim stone passage with its high barrel windows, and so out into the street. As he went along a woman passed him with a soft southern laugh. For the rest of the evening she evinced a quite inadequate interest in his movements.

By early dawn, before the light broke, a man from the sierra waited in the prosaic shadow of Malaga railway station, where presently a woman with her head and shoulders wrapped up against the chill of dawn, came to him

—the woman whose cadences of laughter Don Luis had heard for the first time. He bowed to her in the tortuous, ill-smelling Malaga street on the previous evening.

Robledo was her lover, who had come down from the sierra to see her with a price upon his head and the light of adventure in his eyes. Isabella liked him for his good looks, though he already was careworn, after the manner of mountaineers; but, for his reckless courage, her heart loved him.

Any account of their conversation would be superfluous. Robledo went away in the earliest train that left the city, thus it came to pass when Don Luis del Monte arrived by a roundabout route at the foothills, the news of his coming and his errand had already been thoroughly handled in the remote glen where Don Q. lived in his solitary greatness like the vulture whose name he bore.

Robledo had made extraordinary haste to carry to his chief intelligence of the danger that threatened, for rumors of Don Felipe Majada's instructions from Madrid and his anger thereat, with his perplexity as to how they should be carried out, had afforded the last week's talk in the mountain gorge. Evening was once more drawing on when Robledo sprang up the narrow winding path to the mouth of the cave in the rock face, where Don Q. chose to house himself apart from his followers.

The chief sat moodily in the cave with his concentrated livid-lidded glare upon the young robber. And, although Robledo was a brave man, he crossed himself furtively.

Then the chief put a question or two, and Robledo told his story at full length. He had followed the governor to Malaga, after that so much was known, so much was guessed, but the plot was fairly understood and hung well together. For Don Luis had told nothing, he was far too experienced for that, but something had been overheard, and a good deal inferred from the purchases he had made, and, in fact, Robledo had proved himself a very creditable detective.

And when Robledo told his story, he gave way to those picturesque exclamations and gestures which the Andalusian loves. And Don Q. listened, laughing here and there tenderly at a man laughs who sees a subtle and hidden humor. When the tale was finished and the chief fell into thought; when he looked up he asked:

"And what is your counsel, Robledo?"

But Robledo knew his master too well.

"My lord orders," he answered glibly. "There is no knowledge nor will in the sierra but my lord's."

Don Q. closed his delicate claw-like hand.

"That is well, Robledo, my child, for if there were to be any more of him."

Robledo crossed himself again suddenly and involuntarily, and the chief caught the motion.

"And why that, Robledo?" said he.

"There is no thinking of the soul of this Don Luis del Monte," replied Robledo, with ready untruthfulness.

"Ah, then bring Gaspar and Andres."

A very few moments the three men stood in silent line before him.

"Robledo," he said, "you will go down beyond the valley of the cork-trees, and wait on the southern terrace, and take men with you, for it may be that Don Luis will come by that way. And you will deal gently with him. You, Andres, will go toward the passes, for it also is a travel-path through the sierra. You will bring this caballero to me very safely. And listen, Robledo."

"Yes, lord."

"We share a secret between us and—"

"Yes, lord."

"When it ceases to be a secret you will cease to be a man. Now go."

The two men turned away from the terrace, and Don Q. followed the lean, sinewy figure till their scarlet fajas disappeared down the slope, and he seemed to forget the presence of the third, his head drooped upon his breast, and he remained still and mute like some bird sleeping in a nest.

Meantime Gaspar stood and waited without moving hand or foot.

"And for you, Gaspar," said Don Q. abruptly, but in the same tone as if he had just ceased speaking, "and for you, Gaspar, a peaceful end—the shrine of San Pedro. You will see the Fathers."

"Yes, lord."

"Take with you this bag of pesetas and the keys to say masses, beginning next Friday, for—"

Don Q. paused; Gaspar stood in the same patient, unseeing attitude.

"The soul of Don Luis del Monte."

Meanwhile, Don Luis rode on, unknowing. On the second morning he had left the open stretches of heath and palmetto behind him, and was mounting the lower spurs of the sierra. He had no guide, but the slope swept a wide circle about the Boca de Lobo, and capture was equally probable anywhere upon the sierra.

In the lining of his hat del Monte had secreted a small, slenderly heeled shoe, take Don Q.'s life. Beyond that one resolution his plans were in the clouds, but he relied, as he had had reason to do in many other crises of his career, on chance, treachery and a good wit.

At length he entered upon a wide valley of corkwoods and flex trees, where he rested during the heat of the day, and as the cooler airs of evening mounted again and pushed upward, the first dew was beginning to fall when he halted under a white, outlying limestone crag to look around.

On every side, range beyond range, the sierra rose, stony and sinister. The utter loneliness of the scene, the fact that he was bound on a desperate errand, that there was no help possible against the bloodthirsty men into whose power he was about to give himself, might well have made him pause, but del Monte's single thought at that moment was success, and the supply of money it promised him for another fling at the tables.

A stone rolled down the perpendicular face of the crag and fell at the horse's feet, but Don Luis was lighting a cigarette and seemed too busy to look up. Then a shot whizzed past his head, ripping a shred of felt from his broad-brimmed hat, but he finished with his cigarette, threw away the match, and was about to raise his eyes when a loop of rope fell sharply over him and he was jerked from his saddle upward.

The indignity of his position as he was hauled up the face of the cliff amidst the jeers of the bandits roused



WITH A RAPID MOVEMENT HE UNSTOPPERED THE BOTTLE AND POURED ITS CONTENTS LIBERALLY INTO THE BRIGANDS WINE.

del Monte, who passed a bad quarter of an hour dangling furiously at the rope's end until exhaustion compelled him to allow himself to be secured without resistance.

Nearly all that night the men drove him stumbling wearily through the higher mountain tracks.

At the end of his journey Don Luis was blindfolded, and led by winding turns and through the chill of an underground passage into the enclosed glen where the brigand chief waited for his coming.

While Robledo went into the cave to make his report, del Monte was left with a couple of sullen guards, in the valley. One happened to be Gaspar, whose errand to the fathers had been happily concluded.

"My friend," began Don Luis presently, "is this captain of yours all one hears of him down there in the plains? Is it true that he buries his prisoners alive?"

"When he does not crucify them!" replied Gaspar shortly. "It often took a great labor to dig holes in our rocks."

"And you? Do not some of you taste death slowly—in a like manner?" asked Don Luis insolently.

"You have been heard of," was the imperturbable reply.

"And you love him better afterwards?"

"In the mountains love and fear are one," said the robber.

At length Robledo led the captive into the presence of Don Q. The cave struck warm yet the chief was muffled in his cloak, but he bared his head in greeting as del Monte entered. The two men stood face to face and surveyed each other, silently, before Don Q. spoke.

"Your mother, señor, was of the family of the De Casselos?" he asked with entire courtesy.

"The strangeness of the question startled Don Luis as much as the appearance of the man who put it.

"I did not think you would be likely to interest yourself in these matters," he replied haughtily.

"You know," returned Don Q. with extreme softness.

Yet Don Luis only by an extreme effort kept up the manner in which he had begun the conversation.

"A gentleman of your profession—" he began.

"A gentleman is still a gentleman—in my profession. Answer my question, señor, if you please."

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"You know, her then, señor, that you ask me this?"

Don Q.'s thickened eyelids quivered; he raised his head with a fine gesture.

"That pleasure was mine. I knew her very well," he answered simply.

"You have her eyes, beautiful exceedingly; but you cannot look another in the face any more than she could. It was a very little defect."

"Of nature?" put in del Monte, half laughing as the other hesitated.

"I was about to say of the heart. But these things belong to the past, and only concern us today in that they prove you to be of gentle blood on both sides."

"I cannot perceive the advantage to me just now."

Don Q. continued gravely:

"Because I may on that account offer you my hospitality," he said, "in return for your parole. It is thus: one deals with equals. Last year I was deceived into offering hospitality to a merchant who sold dried fruits and flour. I assure you the man's manner of breathing offended me so much that I had to rid myself of him before the arrival of his ransom. You will, therefore, comprehend my reasons for troubling you. And if you will not give me your parole we may have a pleasant time pending the arrangement of your affairs."

"I give it," answered del Monte.

enough to be handled mold into little pointed rolls, give each three slashes and place an incipit apart on flat ground, and these are to be baked in a quick oven until browned, and when beginning to color they should be brushed over with a beaten egg.

Drain the peas from the cold water. Place in a saucepan with a half teaspoonful of salt and sugar, a quarter of a teaspoonful of white pepper and two scant tablespoonfuls of butter; if you have it you may add one leaf of fresh mint, which is to be removed before they are taken from the fire. Heat, shaking often, until smoking hot, then dish at once.

The sliced cucumbers have been standing in a bowl of chopped ice. Drain off most of the water and pour directly over the cucumbers a French dressing prepared by mixing together four tablespoonfuls of olive oil, a half teaspoonful of salt, a quarter of a teaspoonful of black pepper and one tablespoonful of plain or tarragon vinegar. Add another cupful of chopped lettuce and mix well.

The large oysters which have been rinsed and drained should be placed in a saucepan with a dash of salt and pepper and a half cupful of strained oyster liquor and heated rapidly until oysters begin to plump and ruffle. Take instantly from the fire, drain them, and set away on ice to chill thoroughly. In a salad bowl arrange the oysters, drop the oysters in the center, sprinkle them with a single spoonful of the French dressing. Send to the table with the salad bowl of mayonnaise to which has been added a little stiffly whipped cream.

THE NEW YORK BANKER.

(Washington Star.)

If some small youngster lurks about with paper that is queer.

They'll hand three hundred thousand out Without a sign of fear.

If cash is there your honest due They'll make you search the city through To be identified.

So Sweet and Unselfish of Him.

(Kansas City Times.)

The sole concern of Senator Foraker in connection with the railroad rate bill seems to be that it shall conserve the interests of the people.

Always With Us.

(New York Herald.)

They may strike, or decline to, if that be their will, but the smoke of the soft coal will cling to us still.

with a very present thought that death would soon free him from his word; "I foresee that I shall enjoy my visit to the sierra, señor, although I hope you will not be very severe in the matter of a ransom."

"It is unfortunately one of the exigencies of my position that I have my children to maintain!" Don Q. indicated the figures of Robledo and Gaspar in the aperture of the cave. "We must have our demands paid in full or—"

"Or?" repeated Don Luis.

"No, no," said the brigand, with a sympathetic smile; "we will not spoil our first meeting with dismal considerations. I can recommend these cigarettes; you will find them passable."

"I must congratulate you on the discipline of your comrade men," Don Luis said, fingering a cigarette thoughtfully.

"Many others have complimented me also upon that. I assure you, señor, it always gratifies me."

But it must be owned that Don Luis del Monte, from the moment he was brought into the presence of Don Q., began to like his errand less.

Nevertheless, he neglected no point that might assist him in his design; he observed, he bridled his natural insolence, he went cautiously. He quite understood that he was dealing with one who would strike before he spoke.

On a single occasion only he forgot his self-control for a moment. They were talking of former days, and Don Q. had been relating stories, with reserve indeed, but also with force and a fine power of detail.

He told of an accident of the bull ring in some town to which he gave no name.

"Can you not trust me with that most interesting name, señor?" asked Del Monte, his sneer obscured by a smile.

"Do you wish to know the name I bore before I covered it with the title by which I am called today?" Don Q. looked at him with a significance his words did not convey.

"Yes, by your favor."

The brigand laughed very softly, but with an intensity of amusement that sent a chill of misgiving down Del Monte's spine.

"But yes, señor—since we are friends," added he, almost nervously.

"True, I had forgotten that. I can promise you shall know—some day."

The promise, however, failed to convey any distinct impression of pleasure to the governor's emissary.

At length the ransom arrived. Don Luis had by this time conceived his plot in detail. As soon as his captor actually held the ransom in possession, the assassin descended from the balcony to the governor's emissary.

Once rid of Don Q., he believed himself equal to dealing with the remainder of the band.

But, although he was watchful throughout the day, no opportunity occurred for using the sword.

Even in his most morose and absorbed moments, always showed the unsleeping vigilance of a wild bird. The blinking gaze always opened upon Del Monte if he stirred, and, though the brigand's hand fell upon the phial of poison in his pocket, he never found the few minutes' grace to do the deed.

By night this failure began to work upon his nerves.

Without, only the cold scent of the wind, and the red fires that burned below in the darkness of the glen; within, that terrible companion, whose bleared eyes never seemed to close.

But at length, a chance came of it. A robber, hoarse and diffident, appeared in the mouth of the cave, and Don Q. went out to him, leaving Del Monte alone.

With a rapid movement he unstopped the bottle and poured its contents liberally into the brigand's wine. Then he sank back with a great sigh. The tension was broken; Don Q. was practically dead.

Presently Don Q. came back and resumed his seat opposite.

"Señor," he said, in the old days it used to be the custom here in the sierra for guest and host to exchange glasses. Let us follow the custom and do so now."

He filled his glass with the poisoned wine and passed it over to Don Luis, who accepted it with a bow. Then, Don Luis, pouring out half the wine into his own glass, handed that in exchange to Don Q.

"We will drink to our friendship and mutual prosperity, señor," said he, using the words of the toast.

To the first drinker he the best wish," quoted Don Q., with much urbanity. "Drink, then, my friend; I do not grudge you a better fortune, alas, than mine."

"But, no, señor," declared Don Luis gallantly; "then I must urge that your need is greater than mine. Drink, and man all befall as one would desire!"

How long this pretended struggle of generosity might have been maintained it is impossible to tell, had not the chief brought the scene to an end. He would take no refusal, while the other desperately declined.

"Why do you not drink?" cried the brigand. "I do not poison my guests!"

But a saving thought had by this time come to Don Luis's help.

"They call this the parting cup, señor," he replied; "therefore I will not drink it with you. You are alone here; you need a gentleman's hand to trust. If you want a lieutenant, why, you see before you a man who has dealt with the difficulties of life and whose courage needs no testing. I have a liking for you, señor; let me keep you company up here in the sierra!"

Don Q. seemed to pause for consideration.

"Then it shall be as you say," he said at last; "you shall keep me company up here, and the sierra—eterna—eterna company! I may follow five years hence or tomorrow, but you—go tonight!"

Don Q. was more courteous, more soft-spoken than ever, and Del Monte stared at him. Then he closed his throat, for something rose in it that choked him.

"I do not think I quite take your meaning," he said.

"It is plain, nevertheless. Luis Del Monte. What passed between you and that gross fool Felipe Majada on the balcony at Malaga? What errand brought you into the mountains but that which is held together by a few drops of poison at the one end and two thousand dollars at the other? I know it all! And if I have sinned against heaven my punishment has come to me now—that the hand of your mother's son should be raised to seek my life."

"Señor, hear me!"

But rough fingers were slapped upon his mouth, and in a moment he was pinned at the door of the cave.

The plan was painted in upon the darkness.

Yellow handkerchiefs tied across their brows, were playing cards beside the fires. Behind them rose the rocky wall of the valley.

When Don Q. spoke again he delivered sentences in cold tones.

"I was at some trouble," he said, "to allow you time enough to poison my wine. You did it. And now it still wants five minutes to midnight, and at 7 and 9 in the morning two things are going to happen. The both concern you intimately. Can you guess? At 9 the priests of San Pedro, the little church you passed on your way here, will begin to sing masses for a soul. Yours, Don Luis, have not completed the operation by 9 o'clock, why you will, of course, lose some of the good things the kind fathers are trying to do for you!"

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INCIDENT OF TWAIN'S WORK AS A REPORTER

Mark Twain was the guest of honor at a dinner recently given by the Press club and the Manhattan Dickens Fellowship in the Press club rooms to commemorate the ninety-fourth anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens. In the course of his speech the humorist said that he had always taken an interest in young people who wanted to become poets. He remembered that he had once met a young man in a budding poet when he was a reporter. This young poet's name was Butter. Butter had a great deal to say about the poet's life, and he would write up his death; how he would make a spread of it; how it would appear on the first page of the paper, and it would be a joyful frame of mind to kill himself.

"Butter's idea was to kill himself with a revolver, but Reporter Clemens and the poet didn't have enough money to buy a revolver, and the reporter persuaded the poet to drown himself. Drowning is so nice and clean and writes up well in the newspaper."

"But," said the speaker, "things never do go smoothly in weddings, suicides or courtships. One day at the edge of a water wheel, Butter was explaining himself a life preserver, a big round canvas one which would float after the scap iron was soaked out of it."

Butter wouldn't kill himself with the life preserver in sight and Reporter Clemens had an idea. He took it to a pawnshop and soaked it for a revolver. The pawnbroker didn't think much of the exchange but when Clemens explained the situation he acquiesced. The reporter and the poet went up on top of a high building, and this is what happened to the poet."

"He put the revolver to his forehead and blew a tunnel straight through his head. The tunnel was about the size of your finger. You could look through it. The job was complete; there was nothing in it."

"Well, after that," concluded the humorist, "that man never could write prose, but he could write poetry. He could write it after he had blown his brains out. There is lots of that talent all over